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INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0582
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0660
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0074
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J5 SEOUL KOR
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 001473

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/18/2015
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [KS](#)
SUBJECT: SOUTH KOREAN READOUT ON PRC-ROK-JAPAN TRILATERAL
ON LATIN AMERICA

REF: SEOUL 1298

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) On May 2, Lim Ki-mo, Director of MOFAT's Latin American and Caribbean Regional Cooperation Division, briefed poloff on the April 26 Director General-level trilateral meeting in Beijing between Chinese, Japanese, and Korean officials to discuss Latin America. The meeting's objective was to explore areas for greater understanding in cultural, economic, and military issues with the region. Lim mentioned the Japanese suggestion that China should clarify whether it wanted to seek donor or recipient status before entering the Inter-American Development Bank. On a possible visit by Venezuelan President Chavez to Asia, China would probably approve a state visit, Japan would lean toward a working visit, and Korea would have to decide based on a reading of USG sensitivities and regional considerations. The next trilateral may be next year, perhaps in Korea. END SUMMARY.

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STARTING IS THE FIRST STEP

¶2. (C) Latin American and Caribbean Cooperation Division Director Lim Ki-mo met with poloff on May 2 to provide a readout of the April 26 trilateral on Latin America between ROKG, PRC, and Japanese officials, as promised during the visit of A/S Shannon to Seoul on April 12 (Ref A). Lim began by expressing appreciation for Shannon's consultations in Korea, saying he welcomed the opportunity to follow-up by discussing the first ROK-PRC-Japan trilateral on Latin America.

¶3. (C) Lim explained that the objective of the 90-minute meeting between Han Byung-kil, Director-General at MOFAT's Latin America and Caribbean Affairs Bureau, his Japanese counterpart DG Sakaba, and his Chinese counterpart DG Zeng, was to explore areas for greater understanding in cultural, economic, and military issues with the region. Talks were at the introductory level, with each side laying out some of its objectives in relatively broad terms. They discussed the value of encouraging closer cultural and economic exchanges with Latin America, promoting joint trade fairs and forums, and, in vague terms, spoke of the opportunity to consider joint economic projects. As a smaller country, Lim opined that Seoul saw its role in these consultations as helping to

mediate between Beijing and Tokyo. Seoul may offer to host the next trilateral perhaps next year.

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JAPAN

14. (C) The Japanese side, Lim noted, proposed that the three capitals work to invigorate the Forum on East Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean (FEALAC). FEALAC reportedly has undertaken no serious efforts to improve cooperation among members, lacked sufficient financial funding, and lacked significant political support from member countries. Japanese officials also recommended that China decide whether it sought donor or recipient status to the Inter-American Development Bank and how much it would be willing to contribute before being allowed to enter.

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CHINA

15. (C) Lim observed that the Chinese delegation sought to make the case that its efforts to increase economic ties to Latin America were a win-win situation for everyone. Beijing was promoting diversification of its export and import markets and assured ROKG and Japanese officials that a "third country was not the target." The PRC side stated that its domestic producers supplied around 90 percent of its energy needs, so this sector need not be an area for economic or political confrontation with Washington in Latin America. Responding to a Japanese suggestion for more transparency in the military field, specifically in military sales to Latin America, the Chinese side claimed that it only provided defensive weapons to countries in the region. The PRC officials also pointed to their White Paper as evidence of

Chinese military transparency.

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POSSIBLE CHAVEZ VISIT TO ASIA

16. (C) Asked about a possible visit to Asia by the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Lim reported that Chinese officials during a bilateral with the ROKs had said China had no plans to invite President Chavez. Should he ask to travel to China, however, Beijing would probably allow the trip at the state visit level. Separately, Japanese officials responded that Tokyo probably would not oppose a Chavez trip but was likely only to allow a working visit. Lim noted that Seoul had not yet made a decision. South Korea was sensitive to USG concerns, but it would also look to see how its neighbors handled any possible visit.

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